

First Congregational Church
Akron, Ohio,
Portage Co.

HABS No. 22-7 HABC

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
DISTRICT No. 22

Historic American Buildings Survey
Wm. A. Bohnard, District Officer
9815 Newton Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

ADDRESS:
CHIEF ARCHITECT,
2085 NAVY BLDG.

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

District No. 22 - Northern Ohio - William A. Behnard, Director

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Project No. 7 - ATWATER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, Atwater,
Portage County, Ohio.

Built 1838-41 by local mechanics and members of the church.
Present owner, the Atwater Congregational Church.

One story with balcony (no basement originally) - tower, heavy
hewn timber frame-work, stone foundation, lapped siding,
original roof shingles. Hand-made doors, trim and pews.

Atwater Township remained uninhabited, except by Indians, until
1799 when a single family emigrated from one of the New England
States and commenced a settlement. Like most new settlements
little attention was paid to religion. In 1803 Rev. Mr. Leslie
preached on the Sabbath at the house of Major Mansfield. This
is supposed to be the first sermon preached in this place by a
Presbyterian Minister. In 1812 Deacon Ozias Norton and family
came from Old Durham, Conn. Deacon Norton commenced holding
meetings on the Sabbath. In 1815 Deacon Norton moved to Charleston
and Services were abandoned until the arrival of Deacon Johnathan
Baldwin in 1816. He was offered a beautiful situation free of
charge if he would locate in Austinburg, but in view of the low state
of religion and morals in this town, decided to cast his lot here.
He immediately began meetings on the Sabbath, in the home of
Sylvester Baldwin and in a log school house. March 20, 1818, when
most of this township was a dense forest, eleven persons were
organized into a congregation. Services were held in a house and
in a school house.

In 1822 a small brick church was built a few rods from the present
one. The seats were made of rough boards, except one made of a
slab and planed upon the top, for the Minister's family. About
1827 Capt. Caleb Atwater of Wallingford, Ct., the original
proprietor of the township, leased to the church and society
two-hundred acres of land, the avails arising from the use of said
land to be annually applied to the support of the Gospel. In the
fall of 1836 it was decided to erect a large building. The land

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leased to the Society by Capt. Atwater was sold and the proceeds applied to that object. The stone and timber necessary were brought from a neighboring town six miles distant. Most of the stone were brought from the quarry gratuitously, in the space of two days. The building was commenced in 1838. When the frame was ready for erection, Deacon Baldwin, though quite infirm, was brought from his home to invoke the divine blessing upon the work about to be commenced. Shortly after, every man was at his post, when the timber stick by stick was brought to its appropriate place; and at the close of the tenth day this massive structure stood towering toward the heavens, and not the slightest accident occurred during its erection. The building was completed and dedicated November 7, 1841.*

APRIL, 1934.

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